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Soviet Press Is Publicizing Defector's Change of Heart

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MOSCOW, Nov. 5 — Though Vitaly Yurchenko's reported defection had never been mentioned in the Soviet press, his return to the Soviet fold was a major event on the television news.

Soviet viewers saw Mr. Yurchenko, identified as a Soviet diplomat, read his statement in a Soviet Embassy news conference in Washington, saying that he had been kidnapped and drugged by American agents.

The news conference seemed to reflect Soviet satisfaction at recouping on the publicity in the West given to Mr. Yurchenko's defection and, before that, to the flight of the K.G.B. chief in Britain, Oleg A. Gordiyevsky, and the ensuing expulsions of 31 Soviet personnel from Britain and the retaliatory expulsion of an equal number of Britons from the Soviet Union.

Both defections had been treated in the West as major coups. Mr. Yurchenko had been described as a senior K.G.B. officer.

To Induce People to Return

Beside the public relations advantage the Soviet Union hopes to achieve, the publicity about Mr. Yurchenko may be intended to assure defectors that they will not be automatically subject to prosecution if they return.

Mr. Yurchenko was the latest in a series of runaways, notably Svetlana Alliluyeva, Stalin's daughter, and Oleg Bitov, a journalist, who have come back to an apparent welcome from a country that has traditionally regarded defection as a heinous crime.

Many of the returnees, like Mr. Yurchenko, have explained their defections by saying that they were kidnapped and drugged. This was the explanation offered by Mr. Bitov, by three deserters from Soviet forces in Afghanistan and by the father of Andrei Berezhkov, a 16-year-old whose departure with his family from Washington was held up in 1983 until he confirmed that he wanted to leave.

Bitov Is Back at Work on Paper

Mr. Bitov, then foreign culture editor for the weekly newspaper *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, returned in September 1984, a year after he had sought asylum in the West while on a trip to Italy. At a news conference soon after his return, he told an involved tale of being kidnapped and drugged, of having forged statements issued in his name, and of waiting until he could safely slip into the Soviet Embassy in London.

The story was met with skepticism. But to all appearances, Mr. Bitov has been reinstated at the newspaper. Two weeks ago he published an article there about Sergei Antonov, a Bulgarian accused of complicity in the attack on Pope John Paul II.

Next came Miss Alliluyeva, who had defected while in India in 1967. She returned in 1984 with her 13-year-old daughter, Olga Peters, and also gave a news conference, saying that she had not felt free in all her years in the United States and Britain and lived tormented by guilt and longing for Russia.

She said she had become a "favorite pet" of the Central Intelligence Agency, which "went to the limits of telling what I should write, when and how."

Alliluyeva Now Living in Tbilisi

Soon after her return, she moved to Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, Stalin's home area. She was given a comfortable apartment and has been seen at cultural events. Her daughter is not attending school because she does not speak Russian and is reportedly being tutored. Miss Alliluyeva is said to be unhappy and to have argued with friends.

At about the time she returned, two Soviet deserters from Afghanistan who had settled in Britain also chose to return home, and a month later another deserter, who had gone to the United States, decided to go back.

After Igor Rykov and Oleg Khlan had returned from Britain, *Izvestia* published an article saying that they had been drugged with opium and hashish while being taken to Pakistan, where they were beaten and chained and forced by Western intelligence agencies to make anti-Soviet statements.

Nothing has been heard about the pair, or about Nikolai Ryzhkov, the third deserter.

Story of Diplomat's Son

One of the more bizarre incidents involved Andrei Berezhkov, the son of Valentin Berezhkov, a diplomat who had served as Stalin's interpreter at the Potsdam conference of 1945.

Shortly before the Berezhkovs were to leave Washington in 1983, Andrei disappeared, and a letter he purportedly wrote said, "I hate my country, I want to stay here." He then reappeared and denied that he wanted to remain in the United States.

In Moscow, Mr. Berezhkov's father is editor of the magazine *U.S.A.*, published by Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada, and he appears frequently at Western cocktail parties, where he says his son is attending a musical high school and is living a normal life.

The Soviet press occasionally carries articles about Jews who return. They are usually quoted as having had a hard time abroad and as expressing regret at having emigrated.

The issue of defection has become the subject of a Soviet movie, "Flight 222." The film is broadly based on a 1979 incident surrounding the defection of a ballet dancer, Aleksandr Godunov, and the Americans' refusal to let a Soviet airliner with his wife leave until she confirmed she wanted to return to the Soviet Union. At the end, she is critical of both the Americans and the Soviet officials for failing to trust her own judgment.